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ABSTRACT

A content analysis model for assessing advertising themes and messages generated primarily for United States markets to overcome barriers in the cultural environment of international markets was developed and tested. The model is based on three primary categories for generating, evaluating, and executing advertisements: rational, emotional, and moral. Focusing on computer advertising as an example, it is argued that technology shapes language and culture. An exploratory study hypothesized that in lesser developed countries there is more use of rational advertising appeals than of emotional advertising appeals. In contrast, for countries with more advanced technologies the emphasis will be on greater visual orientation. These concepts are illustrated through a comparative study, after which models for content analysis are presented as a proposed empirical study. It is hoped that the new model will benefit instructors who teach students to appreciate differences in language and culture and who also teach appreciation of the general economy. (Three exhibits are included and 21 references are attached.) (Author/MG)

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LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVERTISING IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETS: A MODEL FOR MESSAGE CONTENT AND MESSAGE EXECUTION

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Language Implications for Advertising in International Markets: A Model for Message Content and Message Execution

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Abstract

We present a content analysis model for assessing advertising themes and messages generated primarily for U.S. markets to overcome barriers in the cultural environment of international markets. Our model is based on three primary categories for generating, evaluating, and executing advertisements: rational, emotional, and moral. Focusing on computer advertising, as an example, we argue that technology shapes language and culture. As an exploratory study, we hypothesize that in lesser developed countries there is more use of the rational appeals than of emotional advertising appeals. In contrast, for countries with more advanced technologies the emphasis will be on greater visual orientation. We first illustrate these concepts through an investigated study, comparing computer advertisements in the United States with non-American countries; and then, we present models for content analysis as a proposed empirical study.

Our paper should benefit instructors who teach students to appreciate the differences in language and culture, and for educating them in the appreciation of the global economy.

Acknowledgement: the authors wish to thank Susan Ciske, Mark Fikany, and Mukund Padmanabhan for their research assistance on this project.

Introduction

American culture encourages consumers to shop by computer, bank by computer, and communicate through a computer. As a social vehicle, computerization, in spite of its positive effect, has replaced workers. A familiar western cliche is that the American culture is becoming a computer society. The irony, however, is that the American culture is placing less value on leisure time which predisposes the value of computer automation. The spirit of computer advertisements in the American culture is upbeat: bright colors, vivid messages, and bold text reflect a high spirited culture in American advertising (Belk; Pollay; Belk and Pollay). A working principle in American computer advertisements is the emotional appeal, serving as a time saver and as a time manager, for consumers as a whole rather than as selected segments. For example, the computer image highlights consumers who need to receive information quickly and easily: updated material at a moment's notice. In contrast, non-American cultures, that are more relaxed and slower paced, do not experience the time orientation inherent in American culture or advertising (Klippel and Boewadt). With the use of a computer lacking in daily routines for non-Americans, their computer advertisements appeal to experts in the industry and not the common

consumer (Dunn; Onkvisit and Shaw). Although the information factor is also true of non-American advertisements, the technology industry or executive level corporate head mainly serve as spokespersons in the advertisements.

A major task in marketing a product in the United States' print media is to determine the written message of an advertisement (message generation) and to exemplify this message (the execution of an advertisement) with a visual image or metaphor (Kostelnick; Jacoby and Hoyer). This task is complicated in international marketing for several reasons: a direct translation does not take into account the cultural aspects related to language (Colvin et al; Hornik and Rubinow); the persona of an advertisement loses impact when translated (Onkvisit and Shaw; Sawyer; Hornik and Rubinow); and, written and visual messages taken together often do not reflect the cultural perceptions of the intended audience (Borisoff and Victor; Pitts).

The purpose of our paper, then, is to substantiate these claims. Through our inquiry we hope to contribute to international advertising. Through utilizing content analysis by examining the similarities and differences in advertisement content between U.S. and selective non-U.S. print advertisements, we hope that our preliminary findings can be used for further research. Our paper has two phases to it: Phase I is an exploration and survey of our hypotheses to determine different advertising strategies apparent in different countries; Phase II is the presentation and discussion of three models for content analysis.

Phase I: Investigation

We surveyed computer print advertisements which appeared in the U.S., Britain, West Germany, and French newsweeklies during a six month period (June 1988 through December 1988) to operationalize the purposes of this exploratory study. To strengthen the comparability of the findings, we used Newsweek and Business Week (U.S.), The Economist (U.K.), Der Spiegel (W. Germany) and L'Express (France). As stated in our introduction, the focus on computer print advertisements appropriately exemplifies the cultural and language differences in the global economy. Extensive review of the literature led to the following hypotheses:

H1: How the computer is depicted in American print advertisements will be significantly different from the way it is depicted in non-American print advertisements.

Research tells us that consumers respond best to emotional appeals rather than rational appeals and the informationalist responds best to detailed descriptions (Belk; Pollay; Belk and Pollay). However, the differences in various cultures may account for the manner in which a computer is depicted in an advertisement (Hornik and Rubinow). A noticeable difference is the depiction of computers in United States' advertisements compared to non-American advertisements (Beard).

Generally speaking, American advertisements are "larger than life"; whereas, non-American advertisements are represented in relation to the size of the advertisement; and a computer is often personified in American advertisements but used as a symbol in non-American advertisements. For instance, in American publications a computer sits above the advertising message, generally containing a few words, with the emphasis being placed on the visualization of a computer. Clearly the objective of this type of advertisement is its emotional appeal. The opposite, however, is found in non-American advertisements where the computer is used as a symbol with the remaining advertisement space used for written text about a computer's characteristics and functions. Mainly, the computer advertised in the American culture is consumer oriented; whereas, the computer advertised in a non-American culture is technologically oriented (Tse).

H2: American advertisements will be more likely to use common people in computer print advertisements while non-American advertisements will use authority figures in their advertisements.

A large number of computer print advertisements in American publications contain common people in the advertisements; whereas, the non-American advertisements rely solely on authority figures in advertisements (Jain). For example, American advertisements display managers, secretaries, or small business owners to appeal to the

necessity of purchasing a computer. These advertisements are directed towards businesspersons and imply that to be competitive and successful in American business one must constantly upgrade computers with software (Beard). These advertisements, as discussed under Hypothesis #1, contain small script lines from spokespersons; several advertisements state that computers speed up the amount of work that can be accomplished in a single work day, thus reducing fatigue and anxiety for the common business-person. Although depicting common people, these advertisements are non-discriminating by profession; that is, they appeal to both professionals and non-professionals (Weinberger and Spotts). We can then argue that advertisements which depict human figures appeal to the selling of a concept for computer automation rather than the computer itself. In contrast, it's more common to see in the non-American publications the use of corporate heads or authority figures, not common people. These advertisements appeal to the expert, partly explaining the largest difference in the types of figures portrayed (Killough). It's fair to say that the computer has not reached the consumer level in non-American cultures compared to the magnitude it has reached within the American culture. As one might speculate, then, consumer appeals operate effectively in American advertisements but expert appeals operate effectively in non-American cultures.

H3: Visual content will be more important for American target audiences than for non-American audiences.

The prevalence of colors and bold print are overly apparent in American publications (Pollay). The emphasis is placed on over-sized pictures of computers that contain very little written text. The text largely consists of buzz words, or visual metaphors that emphasize emotional over informational content (Kostelnick). In contrast, non-American publications contain more information and less emotional words (Weinberger); for example, they have descriptive and statistical information--clearly a rational appeal for technicians or computer experts. The color in the American publications is primary in nature; whereas, the color in the non-American publications are primarily black and white (Peebles et al.).

More space exists between the advertisement in non-American publications versus a cluttered approach in the American publications. One could argue that the American culture is a fast-paced culture and the "visual shock" in advertisements slows the consumer down long enough to digest some parts of an advertisement. This theory may partly explain the enlarged size of an advertisement and the use of its primary colors. In contrast, non-American cultures are disciplined in nature and are not as consumer-oriented as the United States (Rice and Lu; Weinberger and Spotts). Their computer appeals are primarily directed toward the executive and the technological expert. As a result, the advertisements are visually technological with detailed decriptions of

computer functions. Their advertisements are represented in black and white giving a sense of reality to an advertisement, thus allowing the consumer to focus on the written content. These initial findings confirm our hypothesis that the visual content of advertisements is more important to the American audience than to the non-American audience.

Summary

American publications have considerably a greater amount of advertisements per copy than those of non-American publications (Pollay). The number of advertisements to edit ratio for American publications averages about three-quarters; whereas, the number of advertisements to edit ratio for the non-American publications average approximately one-quarter (Kostelnick).

As noted in the findings of this exploratory study, significant differences exist between the American and non-American computer advertisements. The American computer advertisements are emotional in nature, appealing primarily to the consumer instead of the technological expert. The consumer is used heavily in the advertisement without severe discrimination to the target audience. The success of computers in the American culture can be attributed to the fast pace at which the American culture operates. In contrast, non-American advertisements are rational in nature (Vaughn; Colvin et al; Dunn). These advertisements are primarily informational, slanted towards the experts in the field;

they're depicted by using either authorities or the computer itself or both as an informational tool.

Phase II: Content Analysis

Content Analysis has received increasing attention in the advertising literature recently (Tse et al.). This type of analysis is important, of course, in understanding the motivational dimensions of the product's target market and modifying advertising copy and layout in light of a particular market's response (Peebles et al; Jacoby and Hoyer). This analysis can be especially important in international advertising: in this domain advertisement content must be in reasonable harmony with the cultural context of its target market to be effective (Levitt). When inappropriately developed or unwisely positioned, an international advertisement's content may become a barrier rather than a medium of effective communication (Jain; Sawyer). Yet an extensive review of the literature shows that the issue has only recently begun receiving research attention (Tse et al.; Vaughn; Rice and Lu).

In using content analysis as a follow-up to our exploratory study we propose a model (Exhibit #1) to demonstrate the decision-making process to validate our hypotheses. It begins with the category of advertisement and branches into two major categories: print medium and visual medium. And from there it extends to two other categories: computer hardware and computer software. It finally connects to two

more categories: American or Non-American. This model is designed to show the interrelatedness and differences in analyzing computer advertising in the global economy.

Exhibit #2 is designed for written analysis of computer advertising. It is circular with four major categories: (1) emotional appeals are presented opposite of (2) rational appeals; and (3) technical language is presented opposite of (4) literary language. Each category has a rating of 1-4, with 1 being the highest. For example, a rater would give a 1 in emotional appeals if a written advertisement contained mostly content that appealed to emotive feelings.

Since visualization of computer advertising is a dominant force, Exhibit #3 contains a rating system of 1-7, with 1 being the highest for four categories. The visual composition (1) is used to measure an advertisement in terms of the amount of space given to a visual; for example, three-quarters of a layout page would receive a high rating. The message, category (2), refers to the written message appearing with the visual image. For example, "this speedy printer is competitive with the best but costs less," appearing with a picture of race horses racing above a smaller image of a computer printer would be rated on consumer appeal. The association, category (3), refers to the connection a rater would make between the message and the visual image. Using the above example, would it be clear that the race horses are associated with speed and competition or with gambling and uncertainity? The personification, category (4), reflects the image that projects the voice of the visualization; this may be an authority figure or an inanimate object.

As a final analysis, quantitative measures will be compared to the visual ratings (Exhibit #2) with those of the written analysis (Exhibit #3), in order to determine consistency or inconsistency between this two major categories. Rater responses will be tested for inter-rater reliability to check for accuracy and consistency. From the proposed collection of data, comprising of advertising in American and non-American publications, we intend to show the cultural and language factors that are prevalent in computer advertisements, as discussed in Phase I. The appreciation of the global economy, hopefully, will be viewed through another dimension, one that opens up more possiblities for further exploration and application in international marketing.

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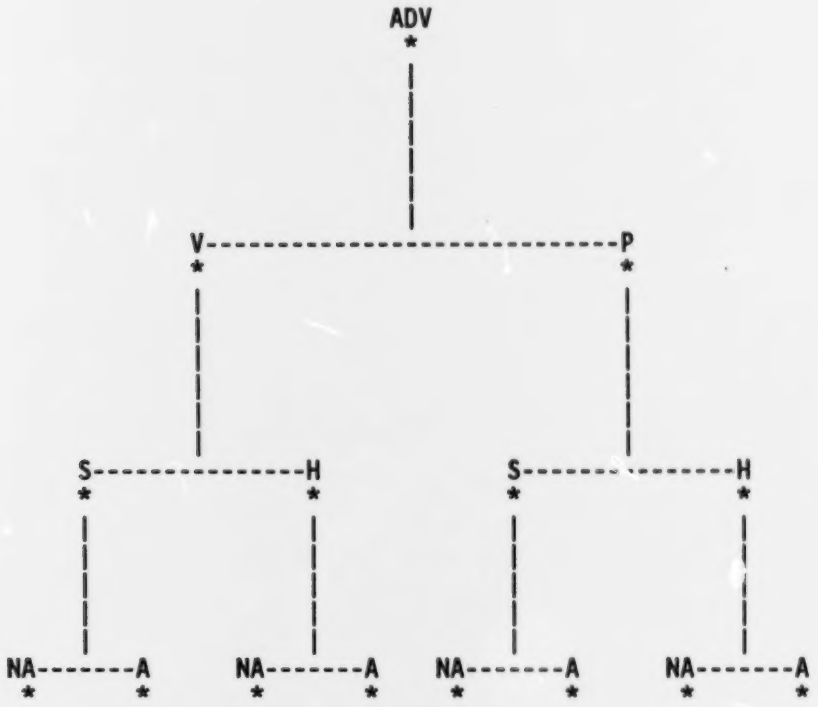
Exhibit #1

Content Analysis Decision Tree

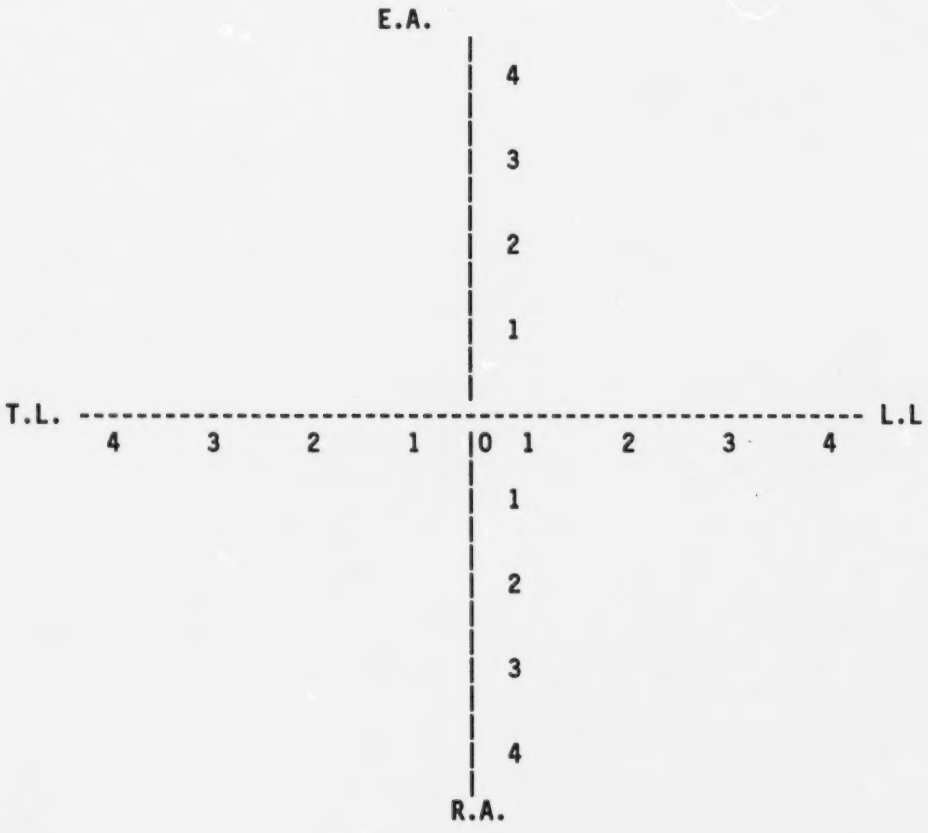


Code

ADV: Advertising V: Visual Medium H: Hardware
S: Software A: American NA: Non-American

Exhibit #2

Written Analysis



Code

E.A.: Emotional Appeals R.A.: Rational Appeals
T.L.: Technical Language L.L.: Literary Language

Rating

4 = High level, 0 = Low level

Exhibit #3

Visual Analysis

	Visual Composition	Message	Association	Personification
High 1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
Low 7				

Rating

On a Standard Likert Scale, 1 is High and 7 is Low.

Authors' Biography

John D. Beard is Assistant Professor of Business Communication in the Department of Marketing at Wayne State University and holds his doctorate in English from the University of Michigan. His publications include "Increasing the Effectiveness of Direct Mail Copy through the Use of Readability Formulas" (with D. Williams) in the Journal of Direct Marketing and "Directions and Issues in Technical Communication Research" (with D. Williams and S. Doheny-Farina) in the Journal of Technical Communication. He is co-editor of Testing in the English Language Arts (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1986), and Director of NCTE's Public Doublespeak Speakers' Bureau. He serves as the Review Editor of the Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication.

Attila Yaprak is Associate Professor of Marketing in the Department of Marketing at Wayne State University and holds his doctorate in International Business and Marketing from Georgia State University. His publications include "A Cross National Comparison of Consumer Research Measures" (with R. Parameswaran) in the Journal of International Business Studies and "The American Challenge in International Advertising" (with N. Aydin and V. Terpstra) in the Journal of Advertising. He is Associate Editor of the Journal of Business Research, Book Review Editor of the Journal of Global Marketing and serves on the Editorial Review Boards of the International Marketing Review and the Journal of International Consumer Marketing.